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# Public Perceptions of Police Interactions with Juveniles

Jillian Orr

## Abstract

While previous research shows how different people respond differently to situations regarding police use of force on juveniles (Michael Brown, Tamir Rice) this paper delves into what aspect each person has that influences the way individuals feel police officers should respond to a juvenile suspect. I surveyed a group of about 300 people and asked them to give their responses to a vignette in which they were the acting police officer. Then, I analyzed the public opinion results through the lens of authoritarianism and compared them to the variables of age, gender, employment, and education. This study would have benefited from a larger and more diverse sample size and should be a core part for future research studies. Ultimately, this study showed the overall discontent of public opinion with police protocol regarding the use of force on juveniles.

## Research Questions

- How does the public view police use of force on juveniles?
- What factors contribute to the difference in

opinions regarding police interactions with juveniles?

- How should police officers utilize their discretion in cases involving juveniles?
- Should there be a separate training for police officers to respond not only to juveniles' physical strength/size but also to their mental capacity and unfinished brain development?

## Introduction

Over the past few decades, police departments all across the United States have been critiqued and criticized by the public, and the media has been dedicating much time and resources to publicizing events related to the police use of force/police brutality. More recently, the public's outcry has been primarily focused on the need for better treatment of America's youth population. Many are demanding different protocols to counteract the violence between youth and police officers (ACLU, 2018). Police officers' main directive is to serve their community, and one of the most important ways to do that is to plan for a better future and take care of the younger generations. Because the juvenile population is the future, everything the community does should attempt to set them up for success. Police officers are public servants who maintain order while keeping

the community as safe as possible. To ensure that police officers are guaranteeing the safest future for their community, they have to do their part in keeping adolescents on the path to success and out of the criminal justice system. For people to know how to better police their own communities, it is important for us to know what the public wants out of their police department. This research analyzes how the public views police use of force and how it differs from juveniles to adult offenders, the general public's awareness of famous police use of force cases such as Michael Brown and Tamir Rice, and how the public responds to various policing scenarios by using a series of vignettes.

Although members of the political elite have been extremely polarized in their views for some time, scholars have begun to discuss whether the general American population has become polarized as well. Hetherington and Weiler's (2010) explanation of authoritarianism is widely accepted as the cause for the divide. They analyze people's views on good and evil, right and wrong, gay marriage, race, illegal immigration, and use of force as a security measure, and conclude that people's views depend in part on their level of authoritarianism. In general, people with stronger authoritarian beliefs have less

patience for people who break the rules or challenge the authoritative figures they believe are important (Hetherington and Weiler, 2010). This research is broken into three main parts: a history of juvenile-police interactions, a discussion of juvenile brain development, and a summary of Supreme Court Cases that ruled on juveniles in the criminal justice system. Then, I will utilize a unique survey data set to test the effects of age, gender, employment, and education on participants response to police use of force on juveniles. I will focus on public opinion through the lens of authoritarianism. I will analyze the relationships between age, gender, education, and employment and how respondents said they would respond to different vignettes explaining a possible police encounter.

### **Famous Cases/History of Juvenile-Police Interactions**

Although police-involved deaths of juveniles (particularly juveniles of color) occurred before 2014, the deaths of Michael Brown and Tamir Rice brought national public awareness to how frequently they occur. These two deaths, on top the actions of various protest groups such as Black Lives Matter, sparked a movement that demanded better training of police

officers and more comprehensive investigations when they utilize force.

On August 9, 2014, Darren Wilson, a 28-year-old police officer of Ferguson, Missouri, fatally shot an African-American male by the name of Michael Brown Jr. just months after his high school graduation. Earlier that day, Brown, accompanied by Dorian Johnson, was caught on camera stealing a box of cigars from a local convenience store and the police were called. Wilson arrived at the scene and called for backup as soon as he spotted Brown and Johnson. The supposed events of the rest of the day are different depending on who is asked. Allegedly, Wilson drove up to the suspects and ordered them to move away from the street. When he pulled his cruiser closer to them, Brown allegedly reached for Wilson's gun and, during the altercation inside of the vehicle, two shots were fired and one of them hit Brown's right hand. Brown and Johnson attempted to flee the scene and hid behind a car as Wilson exited the vehicle. Wilson pursued the two suspects and 10 more shots were fired after the physical altercation between him and Brown, the last one assumed to be fatal. Brown was an unarmed juvenile and died on the street that day. The police investigation leading into Johnson's use of force was found to be reasonable as an act of

self-defense. However, the public demanded another investigation after insisting the case was police brutality being covered up by fellow officers leading an insincere and incomplete investigation. This sparked riots in Missouri which spread throughout the entire United States. Although there is no evidence that Brown begged Wilson to put the gun down, the phrase, "Hands up, don't shoot" became the slogan for nationwide protests (Itkowitz, 2014). This timeline of events is allegedly what happened between Wilson and Brown, although most of these instances cannot be proved.

On November 22, 2014, two officers in Cleveland, Ohio by the names of Timothy Loehmann (26) and Frank Garmback (46) received a call about a young, black male by the name of Tamir Rice who was harassing people by pointing a gun at them. The person who called it in informed the dispatcher that the pistol was probably fake and the suspect was likely a juvenile. However, this information was not relayed to Loehmann and Garmback on their initial call to the scene. When they arrived at the scene, both officers yelled at the suspect to "show me your hands" but, as Rice was moving his hand, Loehmann assumed he was reaching to draw his gun and shot him twice. Rice passed away the next day from the gunshot wounds.

During the investigation, the gun was revealed to be an airsoft replica of a pistol. The investigation into Loehmann was complete after the County Sheriff's Office released a statement explaining that Loehmann was acting on protocol since Rice had what appeared to be a firearm in his possession. Rice's family filed a lawsuit against the city and settled for \$6 million. During the aftermath, it was learned that Loehmann had applied to be a police officer in the city of Independence, Ohio and was denied the opportunity based on the fact that he was unfit for duty and emotionally unstable. The Cleveland police department did not do any research or review his personnel file before hiring him as a police officer and Loehmann never disclosed this information during the hiring process. Loehmann's employment with the Cleveland Police Department was terminated two years later after the investigation because he withheld crucial information on his application. This case received international media coverage and quickly became another platform for citizens' protests and riots nationwide (Heisig, 2017).

These are just two examples of cases that sparked a national discussion about police brutality and police use of force on juveniles. This research project was a response to this discussion in an attempt

to find a relationship between authoritarianism and support of police use of force on juveniles.

The issue of juvenile brain development came up in these discussions because Rice and Brown hadn't yet reached the age where the part of their brain that handles consequences of actions was fully developed. Based on the national average, they still had about seven or eight years to develop before their brains would be able to comprehend the severity of their actions and the potential consequences for it (Thurau, 2009). It is crucial to keep in mind the rate of juvenile brain development while discussing police interactions with juveniles because these subjects are not anatomically capable of understanding the situation fully. Police should be trained in brain development, social development, and how to respond to events after analyzing the best way to diffuse the situation without the use of lethal force.

### **Why Juvenile Age Matters**

Initial researchers used juveniles as a method of assessing authoritarianism. They researched how people felt disciplining their children or how strict their households were. They found that less authoritarian people parented their children less strictly than their authoritarian counterparts (Sarwar, 2016). The survey utilized in this research is based

on this connection with the assumption that less-authoritarian people would choose less police use of force on juveniles. Because this survey looks at public opinion through the lens of authoritarianism, it is important to recognize why the age of a juvenile is important in regards to how authoritarian a person is.

Getting into situations with the police has the potential to affect the rest of one's life. Having a criminal record can influence employment opportunities, housing, government programs, and more. Juveniles may not be able to efficiently measure the consequences of getting involved with the police based on the fact that their brains are not fully developed until the age of 25. Understanding consequences, impulse control, and self-regulation are a few of the last characteristics to develop. During the teenage years, individuals care more about what others think about them than anything else, and peer pressure is one of the most destructive factors in their life (Thurau, 2009). Oftentimes, teenage behavior is categorized as experimentative, risky, and careless about potential consequences. Individuals under the age of 25 are not mentally ready to make decisions that will drastically influence the rest of their lives (Thurau, 2009). Because police officers have the discretion to whether or not they will introduce

juveniles into the criminal justice system, their decision must not be made lightly. They have the power to help choose the path these children will walk, and they must have proper training to make the right decision. Even though there is science suggesting that juveniles do not have proper brain development to make decisions and understand consequences, states have expanded the qualifications for a juvenile to be charged as an adult. In 1998, about 7,100 juveniles were charged as adults with felonies in criminal court (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018).

In conjunction with authoritarianism, the issue of how to handle juveniles in the criminal justice system is not a new discussion. Various cases have made their way to the Supreme Court and inspired change throughout the country, taking into consideration the scientific research available at the time and the data regarding juveniles in the criminal justice system.

### **Supreme Court Cases**

*Roper v. Simmons* (2005) concluded that it is unconstitutional to sentence someone under the age of 18 to capital punishment. Writing for the majority, Justice Kennedy noted three reasons why children should be categorized as separate from their adult counterparts. First, juveniles are immature beings and

have not fully developed their sense of responsibility which results in poorly chosen actions. Second, juveniles are more susceptible to peer pressure and other negative influences. And third, the juvenile's character is not as formed as an adult's. Hence, they have much more potential for rehabilitation than an adult because the character of a juvenile isn't as ingrained in their identity (NJDC, 2008).

*Graham v. Florida* (2010) expanded on the conclusion of *Roper v. Simmons* (2005) and decided that the punishment of life without the possibility of parole was unconstitutional when imposed on a juvenile. Drawing upon the same reasoning, the majority felt that life without the possibility of parole violated the 8th amendment as a cruel and unusual punishment for a juvenile (NJDC, 2008).

*Miller v. Alabama* (2012) expanded upon both *Roper v. Simmons* (2005) and *Graham v. Florida* (2010) and decided that it is unconstitutional to sentence a juvenile to life without the possibility of parole for a homicide conviction, where that sentence is the only option. The majority concluded that all mitigating factors must be taken into consideration before a juvenile could ever be sentenced to a punishment of life without the possibility of parole (NJDC, 2008).

*J.D.B. v North Carolina* (2011) focused on Miranda rights and how J.D.B., age 13, was never read his Miranda rights while being interrogated by the assistant principal, a police investigator, and a school administrator when he was the prime suspect for a burglary. J.D.B. ultimately incriminated himself and was then informed about his right to leave. Justice Sotomayor wrote the Court's opinion and decided that the age of an adolescent could impact how they would perceive his/her freedom to leave. It is reasonable to assume an adult would have probably heard of the Miranda rights and would know, to some extent, that they had a right to an attorney or a right to remain silent but a child probably does not. Justice Sotomayor explained that children, "often lack the experience, perspective, and judgment to recognize and avoid choices that could be detrimental to them." [564 US (2011)]. and went on to refer to police interrogation techniques as events that "would leave a man cold and unimpressed can overawe and overwhelm a [teen]." [564 US (2011)]. *J.D.B. v North Carolina* (2011) was a pivotal moment in the Court's discussion, stating that age is "more than a chronological fact" [564 US (2011)]. This case established that age is a crucial detail in a case and should be taken into consideration when rewriting



police protocols with juveniles. The Court recognizes that a juvenile's age plays a major role in how they act and respond to police, and the same notion should be reflected in police department protocol throughout the country.

Because scientific research of juvenile brain development has not yet been incorporated into the field of police work, this research focused on the public's response. This research will study how the general population thinks juveniles should be treated within the system while utilizing a real-life scenario that a police officer could face in his/her line of work. The initial role of a police officer is to help and support the community and, therefore, police departments and departmental protocol should respond to the public's concern and somewhat mirror the wants and needs of the community.

### **Purpose of Research**

A large majority of police interactions with juveniles are in response to minor legal matters. Most juveniles are arrested for low-level, nonviolent offenses, and they report that the police officers treat them with disrespect (Myers, 2004). Arresting juveniles oftentimes initiates their cycle through the criminal justice system and causes harm to the individual and their family. Additionally, it unnecessarily taxes our

public resources. Police academies are not teaching their recruits what they have to know about the juvenile development to successfully and sufficiently work with younger populations (Strategies for Youth, 2013). Police officers should be made aware that the adolescent brain does not fully develop until the early- or mid-twenties, especially because this fact pertains to the decision-making and consequential sides of the brain. When dealing with children and teenagers, police officers should be able to effectively and efficiently communicate with individuals using de-escalation techniques, leaving force (especially lethal force) as a last resort.

Because police officers are there to serve their community, it is important to get the public's opinion on what would be an appropriate amount of force. Weitzer (2002) argues that incidents involving police misconduct drastically alter the public's opinion towards police, but that these cases are rarely ever investigated. Listening to public opinion and responding to it acts as a mechanism of leverage for police accountability. Although police are not elected public officials, they should be held to an honorable standard and should respond to the concerns of the population they are serving.



This study researches the public perceptions of police interactions with juveniles. It utilizes a survey that asked participants their knowledge about the current topic, asked demographic questions including their age, gender, employment, and education, and then provided vignettes on how they would handle an interaction with a juvenile if they were a police officer.

### **Methodology**

In testing the public's opinion on police interactions with juveniles, I surveyed about 330 people from Plymouth County, Massachusetts. I utilized the online survey platform Qualtrics to distribute my questionnaire because it was time effective, cost effective, and decreased the probability of social desirability bias. I posted on the social media Facebook page *All Things Plymouth*, which is a social media platform for all residents of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and asked residents of Plymouth to participate in my anonymous survey. Within this survey, I asked an array of demographic questions, questions regarding their knowledge of police brutality cases and case law and ended with a series of vignettes. Two vignettes were randomly distributed asking the participant to respond as a police officer to the same scenario but with the offender being a

juvenile or a middle-aged adult. The aim of this was to see how people responded to the same situation when the only changed variable was the age of the offender.

### **Variables and Demographics of Population Sample**

The independent variables I focused on are gender, race, age, education, and employment. According to the United States Census Bureau, out of the 60,000 people living in Plymouth, 51% are female and 49% are male, 95% are white, 3% are Black or African American, 2% are Hispanic or Latino, 1% are Asian, and 1% are American Indian and Alaska Native. Twelve percent of the population is between the ages of 18 and 25, 10% is between the ages of 26 to 35, 13% is between the ages of 36-45, 16% is between the ages of 46 to 55, and 33% is 56 or older. Ninety-three percent of people in Plymouth obtained their high school diploma or some college, and 35% have their bachelor's degree or some type of higher education. In 2016, the most common industries for male residents of Plymouth to work in are construction (20%), retail (19%), food services/accommodation (13%), manufacturing (10%), professional/scientific/technical services (7%), arts/entertainment/recreation (4%), and other services besides public administration (4%). The most common industries for women to work in

were health care/social assistance (23%), retail (15%), food services/accommodation (15%), other services besides public administration (9%), manufacturing (7%), educational services (7%), and finance/insurance (5%).

My sample consisted of 327 respondents, 71% female and 29% male, which is not a clear representative of the town of Plymouth as a whole. 95% of my respondents were white, 1% were black or African American, 0% were American Indian or Alaska Native, 1% were Asian, 0% were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 3% were other. Out of the 327 respondents, 20% were between the ages of 18-25, 19% were between the ages of 26-35, 14% were between the ages of 36-45, 18% were between the ages of 36-45, 17% were between the ages of 46-55, and 19% were 56 or older. Two percent of my sample completed some high school, 21% completed high school or had obtained their GED, 30% completed some college, 11% have their associate degree, 23% have their bachelor's degree, and 13% have a master's degree, PhD, or other professional degree. Only 6% of my respondents work in the criminal justice field, social work, military, or work for the government. With this sample, I tested three independent variables: age, gender, employment,

and education. When discussing employment, I categorized responses as being in the criminal justice field or not being in the criminal justice field. I expanded the criminal justice field to include social work and military as well based on a social workers responsibility for working with at risk youth and people in need of help and a member of the military is understood to be more authoritarian than the average person who is not in the military (Adorno, T.W., E. Frenkel-Brunswick, 1950). Because of the somewhat small sample, I utilized a p-value of less than 0.2 to consider my data approaching statistical significance and less than 0.1 somewhat statistically significant.

### **Data & Analysis**

In the survey, I asked a variety of demographic questions including the respondent's age, occupation, preferred gender identification, etc. Each person was asked whether they were aware of the famous cases of Tamir Rice and Michael Brown and whether or not they were aware that most police departments do not have a separate protocol in place to handle situations with juvenile subjects. Towards the end of the survey, I also gave a vignette describing a police interaction with a subject. There were varying degrees of multiple choice options including a fill-in-the-blank choice. Each vignette had a four part

escalation that transitioned the interaction into a more serious exchange. While responding to the four questions, the respondent could choose one answer that was either utilizing verbal commands, tasing the subject, and shooting with either the intent to injure or intent to kill. I analyzed the responses to the various demographic questions and ran cross-tabulations and Chi-Square for their responses to the vignettes and their responses to the knowledge and awareness-based questions.

### **Age**

There seems to be a generational difference on the attitudes towards authoritarianism. The contemporary criminal justice system is much more authoritarian than democratic because the focus is on tough punishments and punitive policing tactics (Amar and Schneider, 2007). Studies show that urban adult groups are significantly more authoritarian than urban youth groups based on how they respond to questions regarding punishments, parenting techniques, military strategies, and police protocols (Reddy, 1983). This indicates that the older generations are more likely going to be in support of authoritarian behavior and the younger generations are likely going to support more democratic behavior.

**H1:** Older generations are going to favor police use of force.

**H1o:** There is no correlation between age and favoring of police use of force.

When responding to the initial vignette questions, the relationship appeared to be statistically significant. After running a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test (see Table 1 ), the p-value was 0.098 for the first part of the vignette dealing with a juvenile. So, 20% of respondents over the age of 55 decided to taser the juvenile offender, compared to 0% of people ages 26-35, 8% of people ages 36-45, and 0% of people ages 46-55. However, when the respondents were prompted with follow-up questions, the relationship no longer met the guidelines for statistical significance.

My hypothesis was supported as my p-value for one of my vignette questions was somewhat statistically significant. Looking at that, there seems to be a relationship between age and utilizing use of force. Unfortunately, my hypothesis was not supported by the follow-up questions in the vignette as they were not statistically significant and, therefore, could not reject the null hypothesis.

**Table 1****Age and Juvenile Vignette 1**

	18-25 yrs. old	26-35 yrs. old	36-45 yrs. old	46-55 yrs. old	55+ yrs. old
Command subject to exit vehicle	20%	53%	50%	72%	40%
Remove subject from car only using hands	10%	18%	0%	9%	0%
Taser subject	20%	0%	8%	0%	20%
Other	50%	29%	42%	18%	40%

p-value: 0.098

**Gender**

Previous researchers observed that women are less likely to support the use of violence and more willing to support the use of verbal de-escalation techniques (Smith, 1984). Smith (1984) researched how men and women responded to violence and found a moderately strong relationship between gender and support for violence. When it came to questions dealing with law enforcement and criminal behavior/punishments, the men and women responded much differently than questions regarding indirect support of violence, such as potential changes in military and defense budgets. Women are taught to exhibit more empathy with moral issues and are likely to be more aware of sensitive or ethical issues (Chung & Monroe, 2003). Because they are taught to be more empathetic, they are more likely to be concerned for the welfare of others (Bass, 1998).

**H2:** Men are more likely to favor police use of force.

**H2o:** There is no correlation between gender and likelihood to favor police use of force.

I ran cross-tabulations and Chi-Square between the participants' gender and their responses to the different vignette stages regarding the police officers' response. During the third scenario in the vignette that dealt with a juvenile, the p-value was 0.06 which appears to be somewhat statistically significant. In the three responses that did not include violence, women responded at a higher rate than men. However, the two choices that utilized force were favored more by men (see Table 2). Twelve percent of men decided to shoot the subject with intent to kill compared to only 2% of women and 41% of women decided to assure the subject he would not be injured if he put the gun down, compared to 32% of men. According to this

analysis, there appears to be a relationship between gender and one's likeliness to utilize force.

The p-value was less than 0.1 so my data appears to be somewhat statistically significant. Therefore, I will reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is some relationship between gender and use of force.

However, men are also more likely to participate in social desirability bias (Chung, Janne, and Monroe, 2003). From an early age, women are socialized to reason differently than men. When it comes to tests such as the SAT, women usually score higher because they are conditioned to leave the question blank if they don't know it whereas men are more likely to guess. Schoderbek and Deshpande (1996) classify this male likelihood of social desirability bias as impression management, which means they make a conscious effort to lie or fake it in order to create a favorable impression.

**H3:** Men are more likely to be aware of the lack of protocol in place regarding the use of force on juveniles.

**H3o:** There is no correlation between gender and awareness of the lack of protocol regarding use of force on juveniles.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test between gender and whether or not the participant was aware of the lack of police protocol regarding use of force with juveniles (see table 3). 39% of males responded that they were aware of this compared to the 17% of females who were aware of this. My p-value was 0.00 and appears to be statistically significant. Normally, this would be a perfect analysis and I could reject the null hypothesis and conclude there is a relationship between the two variables. However, given the wording of the question and taking into consideration social desirability bias and impression management, it is likely that this number does not accurately represent the true male population's knowledge on this topic. The knowledge and awareness of famous police use-of-force encounters with juveniles appears to be similar for both male and female. However, the p-value was 0.68 and does not appear to be significant (see table 4).

**Table 2**

## Gender and Juvenile Vignette 3

	Male	Female
Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down	32%	41%
Instill fear in subject by telling him he will be shot if he shoots a police officer	0%	8%
Taser subject to induce compliance with commands to drop weapon	4%	13%
Shoot subject (aiming for non-fatal wound)	12%	14%
Shoot subject with intent to kill	24%	2%

p-value: 0.06

**Table 3**

## Gender and Awareness of Current Police Protocols

	Male	Female
Yes	39%	17%
No	61%	83%

p-value: 0.00

**Table 4**

## Gender and Awareness of Famous Police Use-of-Force Encounters with Juvenile Subjects

	Male	Female
Yes	76%	70%
No	24%	30%

p-value: 0.68

## Employment

Research suggests that people who are in the criminal justice profession tend to be more authoritarian in their views, especially those who have no college education (Smith et al, 1967). Researchers studied the New York City's police department's newest police officers and categorized them as college graduates or those with no college education. They tested for authoritarianism by using the Piven (1961) and Rokeach (1960) scales for their behavior and responses to various situations. They concluded that members of the criminal justice system tend to lean towards a more authoritarian belief system, specifically those with lesser education levels. An explanation for this could be the social psychology theory that certain personalities are attracted to certain occupations. Similar to how the field of psychology attracts highly neurotic people, the field of police and correctional institutional work attracts authoritarian personalities (Adorno et al, 1950).

**H4:** The respondents who work/have worked in the criminal justice field are quicker to utilize force than those who have not worked in the criminal justice field.

**H4o:** There is no relationship between employment and use of force.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test between the participants' occupations and their responses to the vignettes. When responding to the third step to the juvenile vignette my p-value was 0.04 which is somewhat statistically significant (see table 5). Nine percent of people with criminal justice backgrounds chose to shoot the juvenile suspect with intent to kill, compared to the 0% with no criminal justice background. Both the first response and the fourth response to the juvenile vignette had a p-value of 0.1 and are approaching the line of being statistically significant. Because my p-value is less than 0.01, it is somewhat statistically significant. With that data alone, I could reject the null hypothesis. We cannot declare a relationship, though, because the follow-up vignettes did not conclude a p-value of less than 0.1.

## Education

Previous scholarship suggests that higher-educated groups tend to be more libertarian and lower-educated groups tend to be more authoritative (Smith et al, 1967). Previous research shows that education is one of the more prominent factors to determine many social stances. Although it is yet to be determined what aspects of education cause this relationship, results from various scholars such as Rune Stubager



**Table 5**

## Employment and Juvenile Vignette 3

	All Other Occupations	Criminal Justice/Social Work/Military Occupations
Assure him he will not be injured if he puts the gun down	23%	41%
Instill fear in subject by telling him he will be shot if he shoots a police officer	8%	7%
Taser subject to induce compliance with commands to drop weapon	0%	12%
Shoot subject (aiming for non-fatal wound)	8%	12%
Shoot subject with intent to kill	0%	9%
Other	62%	20%

p-value: 0.04

**Table 6**

## Level of Education and Juvenile Vignette 1

	Some High School	High School Diploma, GED	Some College	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Masters Degree, PhD, other Professional Degree
Command the Driver to Exit Vehicle and Repeat Commands Until Subject Complies	0%	67%	35%	43%	39%	44%
Try to force him out of car using only officer's hands	0%	0%	0%	7%	22%	13%
Taser Subject	33%	6%	12%	14%	6%	0%
Other	67%	28%	54%	35%	33%	44%

p-value: 0.14

strongly favor the fact that the values of higher educators are transferred onto the students and it results in a fundamental conflict between highly educated and less educated groups.

**H5:** The more educated a person is, the less likely they are to utilize force in their vignettes.

**H5o:** There is no correlation between education and likelihood of force.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test of the variables education and responses to vignettes. In the first step of the juvenile vignette, the p-value was 0.14 (see table 6). Forty-four percent of respondents with a master's degree, PhD, or other professional degree decided to command the driver to exit the vehicle, compared to 0% of respondents with some high school. Similarly, no respondents with a master's degree, PhD, or other professional degree decided to taser the subject, compared to 67% of respondents with some high school. As it is approaching 0.1, it appears to be somewhat statistically significant. Therefore, there could be a relationship between education and their quickness to utilize force in a situation with a juvenile offender. Since it is not less than 0.1, I cannot reject my null

hypothesis and I cannot declare a relationship between education and use of force.

Similarly, a person is more likely to be more aware of societal issues if they are more educated, whereas a less-educated person is less likely to watch the news and stay up-to-date with current events and political issues. According to Matthew Baum (2003), highly educated individuals are more likely to research on their own, where a less-educated individual responds to soft news and does not search for more information regarding the subjects brought up on the news or in newspaper headlines.

**H6:** The more educated a person is, the more likely they are to be aware of famous cases revolving around police brutality.

**H6o:** There is no correlation between education and awareness of police brutality cases.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test for the variables education and awareness of cases and discovered a p-value of 0.38. Since it is not anywhere near approaching the line for statistical significance, it has failed the chi-square test and we cannot reject the null hypothesis.

**H7:** The more educated a person is, the more likely they will be appear of the lack of police protocol regarding juvenile subjects.

**H7o:** There is no correlation between education and awareness of police protocols.

I performed a cross-tabulation and chi-squared test for the variables education and awareness of police protocol regarding juveniles and discovered a p-value of 0.18. Because this would not normally count as statistically significant, we cannot reject the null hypothesis. We cannot reject the null hypothesis and cannot conclude a relationship between the variables education and awareness of police protocols.

## Discussion

Keeping in mind that this was a rather small sample, I had some results that seem to coincide with the qualifications of being statistically significant. There seems to be some type of relationship between use of force and all variables tested (age, gender, employment, and education). It is important to remember that although some of the vignette questions appeared to be statistically significant, the follow-up questions were not. Overall, it is clear that there is

a difference in the way males and females answered these questions. Based on my results, it is fair to say that difference is, in part, due to the existence of impression management, social desirability bias, and our society's way of conditioning females into being more nurturing and empathetic.

Studying the public opinion of police officers will aid in maintaining their accountability. The police departments should respond to public opinion by addressing discontent, holding officers accountable, revamping current protocol, and updating the academies to provide better training for the cadets. The psychological study of juveniles and the anatomical study of their brains show they are not capable of making decisions with respect to the potential consequences. Because the discontent of public opinion is supported by scientific facts, police protocol should more accurately reflect these findings.

## Conclusion

Given the small sample, it could be possible that there is a relationship between variables that our p-value did not support but our data did not have the confidence to produce a strong relationship. In future research, I would urge researchers to gather a bigger sample with more diverse participants. As I would have liked to study the variable of race but could not given my

overwhelming response of white participants, I would try to gather data from a more diverse area. I would also add in the first part to my vignettes that the officer called for back-up, because a lot of my participants filled in that response and clicked “other.” When questioning about what a police officer should do in response to the event, I would also emphasize that the response does not have to comply with current police protocol and should focus on what a police officer *should* respond with, based on the respondents’ values. Future research should strongly keep in mind the idea of social desirability bias and male impression management when drafting questions for the survey. While it is nearly impossible to eliminate some bias, specific question wording could be helpful in limiting the amount of bias in the results. Although distributing an online survey was time efficient and provided me with a high number of responses, I could only base my analysis on the multiple choice or short answer responses. I would suggest doing a focus group to discover the more in-depth reasoning behind an individual’s responses. Even though one would not be able to get a lot of participants, they could delve further into the discussion of public opinion on police in general and what has shaped their participants’ opinion on police interactions with juveniles.

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### **About the Author**

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